

# Your voices keep us well connected

By Eimear O'Brien, Ed.D.  
Superintendent



DO YOU know that Clovis Unified, by any measure, is a very big place?

We have more than 43,000 students (and their families) and almost 7,000 employees. We cover close to 200 square miles in area stretching from the shores of Millerton Lake in the north to Kings Canyon Avenue in the south, from Van Ness Avenue in the west and into the Sierra Nevada foothills in the east. Within our Clovis Unified community, we serve residents of Clovis, Fresno and Fresno County and every day, in some way, we directly touch the lives of hundreds of thousands of people.

In an organization our size, we could easily lose touch with the

voices of those we serve and it is why in Clovis Unified we have core values like "Our schools belong to the community," and sayings like "Education is built on teamwork and trust."

We can never lose sight of who we serve, and we can never stop listening to the individual voices of our students, employees and community in our decision making. I deeply appreciate the chance that I get every month to speak a word into our community through my column in *CUSD Today*. It's a chance not only for me to share with you something of the heart of our leadership, it also provides me with a chance to pause in the day-to-day busyness of leading such a large organization to reflect on the timely and meaningful point that I think you, our community, needs to hear from me as the superintendent.

As I reflected on the purpose of my column, the Thanksgiving season approaching, and the major issues ahead for Clovis Unified, it struck me that you need to hear from me, in my role as superintendent, an acknowledgement of the importance of your voice to us.

Your voices, for which I am so

thankful, are uniquely able to keep our big district small, our decision-making agile enough to respond to the unique needs of our community, and our humanity intact... even as we continue to grow in size and scale.

Last month we started the process to develop new attendance boundaries for our 35th elementary school, and in January 2023 we will begin the same process (but on a much larger scale) for our fourth educational center opening in 2025 to seventh through ninth graders. What school your child attends is significant, and we know that you as a family may have made life decisions based on things like attendance boundaries. At the same time, we continue to grow as a community, and no one wants our children to attend overcrowded schools where everything from restrooms to classrooms are impacted.

Faced with the certainty that we need new schools, we also recognize the emotional impact attendance boundary changes have on families and therefore we have created systems within this planning process to ensure everyone has an opportunity to share their input.

It's important that we hear the thoughts and concerns of families involved in these changes.

In every one of the schools we have opened in the past decade or more, there are things that I can point to that reflect the ideas of our community. I see the fingerprints of community input in the final adopted attendance boundaries and their implementation; in the name, mascot and school colors recommended to the Board; in the very fabric of the school family that takes shape in the early years after opening.

This doesn't happen by chance. It's the result of intentional efforts to involve those we serve in important decisions, and it's the way that we honor and hold true to those core values I mentioned above. For our community in the Clovis East Area, where we are actively working to develop elementary attendance areas, please stay engaged in this process.

If you weren't able to attend the meetings held last month, make sure you mark your calendar now for the Dec. 6 forum where potential boundaries will be reviewed, and your feedback will be gathered. Watch for articles in *CUSD Today* and information emailed directly to you from

your school or the district. Bookmark the boundary webpage that has been created and is linked to every one of our Clovis East Area elementary school websites, and go there for answers to your questions, to see presentation materials and to leave a comment. Our ears are open, and we want to hear from you.

For our entire community, be attuned to announcements after the first of the year related to the year-long process to adopt new attendance boundaries for the Terry Bradley Educational Center's high school and intermediate school.

This process will take most of the year, and boundaries will be adopted about a year and a half prior to the school opening so that the new community can be involved in naming, school colors and mascot decisions that will also be taking place before the school opens.

Simply by reading this column, you are engaging with the local schools who serve you and your family, and I thank you. It's through working together and keeping our eyes on the well-being of all of our students that we can hold onto what makes this district a unique and special place for families.



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